

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 176234
ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 /022 R

DRAFTED BY EA/VLC:TMCARNEY:JY
APPROVED BY EA/VLC:TMCARNEY
-----109648 281207Z /40

R 272213Z JUL 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PARIS
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

UNCLAS STATE 176234

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, US, VM

SUBJECT: HOLBROOKE JULY 27 TESTIMONY ON MIA

1. FOLLOWING ARE STATEMENTS OF HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN
AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS CHAIRMAN LESTER WOLFF AND OF ASSISTANT
SECRETARY HOLBROOKE ON MIA.

2. OPENING STATEMENT OF HONORABLE LESTER L. WOLFF:

GOOD MORNING, THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING. OUR WITNESSES
TODAY ARE PERHAPS THE TWO PEOPLE IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH
BEST ABLE TO PROVIDE THE SUBCOMMITTEE, THE MIA FAMILIES,
AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WITH THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO BE
ASSURED THAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS DOING ALL IN ITS POWER TO
SECURE A FINAL ACCOUNTING IN INDOCHINA.

THE HONORABLE RICHARD HOLBROOKE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
STATE FOR EAST ASIA, IS PRESENTLY IN THE MIDST OF VERY
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 176234

SENSITIVE AND DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF
VIETNAM ON THE ISSUES BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS.

LET ME SAY THAT WE APPRECIATE HIS WORK IN PARIS, AND WE
PARTICULARLY APPRECIATE HIS EFFORTS TO KEEP US INFORMED IN
A FRANK AND TIMELY MANNER OF THE PROGRESS TO DATE.

SECRETARY HOLBROOKE IS ACCOMPANIED BY MR. FRANK SIEVERT;
THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS. MR. SIEVERTS HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE MIA ISSUE FROM ITS INCEPTION, AND WE ARE GLAD TO HAVE HIM HERE TODAY.

BEFORE TURNING TO OUR WITNESSES, LET ME MAKE A COUPLE OF COMMENTS ON SOME OF THE ISSUES WE ARE WORKING WITH HERE. FIRST, AS I NOTED DURING OUR HEARING LAST WEEK WITH DR. KISSINGER, I FEEL IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE MIA ISSUE HAS BECOME ENTANGLED WITH THE LARGER ISSUE OF U.S.-VIETNAM RELATIONS.

THAT THIS WAS INEVITABLE, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE WAR AND THE INITIAL NEGOTIATIONS IN 1972-73, DOES NOT LESSEN THE TRAGEDY THAT A MATTER WHICH TODAY SHOULD BE A PURELY HUMANITARIAN ISSUE IS CAUGHT UP IN A NEGOTIATING PROCESS INVOLVING RECOGNITION, NORMALIZATION AND AID.

AS I SAID LAST WEEK, I SUPPORT ULTIMATE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM AS A USEFUL STEP TOWARDS PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. BUT NORMALIZATION IS A PROCESS, NOT A SUDDEN ACT, AND I SHARE WITH THE MIA FAMILIES AND, I KNOW, OUR WITNESSES TODAY, A DETERMINATION THAT THE QUESTION OF A FINAL ACCOUNTING FOR THE MIA'S NOT BE SOMEHOW LOST OR BURIED IN THE LARGER PROCESS OF
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 176234

NORMALIZATION.

QUITE THE CONTRARY. IT IS MY FEELING THAT WE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO EXPECT A FINAL ACCOUNTING TO BE A NATURAL OUT-GROWTH OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM.

THE PROBLEMS OF CAMBODIA AND LAOS ARE, WE ALL REALIZE, ANOTHER MATTER ALTOGETHER. NO ACCOUNTING IN ANY FORM HAS BEEN REALIZED FROM EITHER NATION TO DATE.

AS YOU KNOW, I PERSONALLY DELIVERED A LETTER TO THE CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN PEKING IN APRIL OF 1976 ASKING THAT NATION TO HELP, ON A HUMANITARIAN BASIS, IN OUR SEARCH FOR MIA'S AND POW'S. NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THAT LETTER HAS EVEN BEEN FORWARDED, MUCH LESS HAS HELP BEEN FORTHCOMING.

GIVEN THE EVENTS IN CAMBODIA, AS SECRETARY HOLBROOKE HAS ALREADY NOTED THIS WEEK, THIS IS PERHAPS HARDLY SURPRISING. SIMILARLY, WE HAVE NEVER HAD ANY WORD ON THE SOME 600 MIA'S KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN LOST IN OR OVER LAOS, INCLUDING SOME 20 POW'S WHO WERE CONFIRMED TO BE THERE AT ONE TIME.

DR. KISSINGER LAST WEEK SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM HAS ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR AN ACCOUNTING FROM LAOS

AND CAMBODIA. I THINK ALL OF US HERE TODAY WOULD BE INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT THE BASIS OF THIS CLAIM, AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ACCOUNTING--WITH OR WITHOUT VIETNAMESE INTERCESSION--FROM LAOS AND CAMBODIA.

FINALLY, LET ME MAKE THIS POINT: I THINK ALL OF US HERE TODAY SHARE A DEDICATION TO HELPING THE MIA FAMILIES GAIN AN ACCOUNTING WHICH IS ACCEPTABLE TO THEM. BUT I THINK WE ALSO SHARE A SENSE OF CAUTION, A SENSE OF THE NECESSITY FOR EXTREME PRECISION IN OUR PUBLIC UTTERANCES
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 176234

ON A SUBJECT WHICH IS SO FRAUGHT WITH POSSIBILITIES FOR MISUNDERSTANDING AND GRIEF.

WITH THAT I AGAIN WELCOME OUR WITNESSES TODAY.

3. STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE RICHARD HOLBROOKE:

I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE TO DISCUSS OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO OBTAIN AN ACCOUNTING FOR AMERICANS LOST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. THIS HAS BEEN A PERSONAL CONCERN OF THE PRESIDENT'S AND OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE, AND IT IS ONE THAT I SHARE. I AM GLAD TO HAVE WITH ME FRANK SIEVERTS, OUR DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS, WHO HAS BEEN DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR OUR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF OUR PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING PERSONNEL. FRANK ACCOMPANIED THE PRESIDENTIAL MIA COMMISSION ON ITS TRIP TO VIETNAM AND LAOS, AND WAS WITH ME IN PARIS AT OUR MEETINGS WITH THE VIETNAMESE IN MAY AND JUNE. AS THE SUBCOMMITTEE KNOWS FROM ITS MEETING WITH LEONARD WOODCOCK, THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION LAID THE BASIS DURING ITS VISIT TO HANOI FOR THE PROGRESS-- LIMITED AS IT HAS BEEN--THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN RESOLVING THIS PROBLEM. WHILE IN HANOI THE COMMISSION RECEIVED VIETNAM'S FORMAL UNDERTAKING TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON OUR MISSING MEN, AND TO RETURN REMAINS AS THEY ARE RECOVERED. IT ALSO REACHED AGREEMENT ON ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT MECHANISM FOR CONTINUING EXCHANGES ON THIS SUBJECT. THIS WAS AN ADVANCE FROM VIETNAM'S PREVIOUS POSITION, IN THAT OTHER ISSUES--AID AND NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS--WERE NO LONGER DESCRIBED AS PRECONDITIONS FOR PROGRESS ON MIA'S.

UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 176234

WE ATTACH SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO VIETNAM'S READINESS TO COOPERATE IN SETTING UP A PERMANENT CHANNEL TO DEAL WITH MIA'S. THEIR AGREEMENT ON THIS WAS PUT TO THE TEST ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEPARTURE OF THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION, WHEN THE MISIDENTIFICATION OF TWO OF THE REMAINS GIVEN TO THE COMMISSION WAS DISCOVERED BY OUR CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY IN HAWAII. WE INFORMED THE VIETNAMESE OF THESE ERRORS AND RECEIVED THEIR ASSURANCE THAT THEY WOULD UNDERTAKE FURTHER EFFORTS IN THESE CASES WITHOUT DELAY.

FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS WERE EXCHANGED AFTER THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION RETURNED TO WASHINGTON, AND WE PROVIDED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON SPECIFIC CASES ON WHOM IT SEEMED ESPECIALLY LIKELY THAT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD HAVE OR COULD FIND INFORMATION. ALTHOUGH THE IMMEDIATE RESULTS WERE LIMITED, THESE COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDED THE BACKGROUND FOR THE OPENING OF OUR TALKS IN PARIS MAY 3-4, AT WHICH DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER PHAN HIEN LED THE VIETNAMESE DELEGATION, AND I HEADED OUR TEAM.

AS THE SUBCOMMITTEE KNOWS FROM MY PREVIOUS TESTIMONY, IN THAT FIRST MEETING WE PROPOSED TO THE VIETNAMESE THAT WE PROCEED TO NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS INCLUDING THE EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS. WE SAID WE WERE PREPARED TO END OUR TRADE EMBARGO CONTINGENT ON THE OPENING OF AN AMERICAN EMBASSY IN HANOI, AND THAT WE WERE PREPARED TO AGREE TO VIETNAM TO VIETNAM'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE U.N. WE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT PROGRESS IN OUR RELATIONS WAS BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION OF CONTINUING EFFORTS ON MIA ACCOUNTING AND RETURN OF REMAINS.

IN CONNECTION WITH THESE TALKS, SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD BETWEEN FRANK SIEVERTS AND HIS VIETNAMESE COUNTERPART, MR. VU HOANG, A SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL AND DIRECTOR OF THE VIETNAMESE OFFICE IN CHARGE
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 176234

OF SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT PERSONNEL MISSING IN THE WAR. MR. HOANG CAME TO PARIS FROM HANOI FOR THESE TALKS AND APPEARED TO SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY ABOUT VIETNAM'S EFFORTS IN THIS AREA.

A SECOND NEGOTIATING ROUND TOOK PLACE JUNE 2-3, ALSO IN PARIS, THIS TIME AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. WE COVERED MUCH THE SAME GROUND IN THESE TWO DAYS AS WE HAD IN THE FIRST SESSION, AND FRANK AGAIN HAD SEPARATE TALKS WITH VU HOANG, WHO HAD RETURNED AGAIN FROM HANOI.

DURING THIS SESSION THE VIETNAMESE PROVIDED A LIST OF TWENTY CASES OF AMERICANS WHOSE REMAINS THEY SAID HAD

BEEN LOCATED AND WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING RECOVERED. SOME OF THESE CASES WERE AMONG THOSE ABOUT WHOM WE HAD PROVIDED DETAILED INFORMATION, AND SOME WERE NOT. NAMES WERE PROVIDED IN FIFTEEN OF THE CASES, AND IN FIVE OTHERS THE IDENTITIES WERE LISTED AS UNKNOWN, MARKING THE FIRST TIME THE VIETNAMESE HAD PROVIDED SUCH INFORMATION WITHOUT GIVEN SPECIFIC NAMES.

IN OUR DISCUSSIONS AT THE MAY 3-4 MEETING AND IN OUR WRITTEN EXCHANGES WITH THE VIETNAMESE, WE STRESSED THE DESIRABILITY OF WITHHOLDING PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF IDENTITIES UNTIL THEY COULD BE CONFIRMED BY OUR LABORATORY IN HAWAII. WE MADE THIS PROPOSAL IN VIEW OF THE ANGUISH CAUSED FOR THE FAMILIES OF THE MEN WHOSE REMAINS HAD BEEN MISIDENTIFIED. AT THE SAME TIME WE INVITED THE VIETNAMESE TO SEND THEIR OWN REPRESENTATIVES TO VISIT THE LABORATORY AND OUR JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER FOR A FIRST HAND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN THIS SUBJECT.

THE VIETNAMESE HAD INFORMED US THEY WOULD AGREE TO
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 176234

WITHHOLD PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF NAMES UNTIL IDENTIFICATIONS HAD BEEN CONFIRMED, AND THEY FOLLOWED THIS POLICY IN THE CASE OF THE TWENTY. WE TOLD THE VIETNAMESE WE WOULD IMMEDIATELY INFORM THE FAMILIES OF THOSE NAMED, BUT FOR OUR PART ALSO WOULD DELAY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL THE REMAINS HAD BEEN RETURNED AND POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED. THE VIETNAMESE ALSO TOLD US THEY WOULD RETURN THE REMAINS OF ANOTHER AIRMAN WHOSE NAME HAD BEEN PROVIDED AT THE MAY 3-4 SESSION (AND WHOSE FAMILY ALSO HAS BEEN INFORMED), AS WELL AS THOSE OF THE U.S. CIVILIAN, TUCKER GOUGELMANN, WHOSE DEATH IN SAIGON HAD BEEN REPORTED TO THE WOODCOCK COMMISSION. THEY SAID THEY WOULD ADDITIONALLY RETURN OTHER REMAINS IF THEY WERE RECOVERED BY THE TIME THESE REMAINS WERE READY TO RETURN.

COMMUNICATIONS HAVE CONTINUED SINCE OUR JUNE SESSION, BUT NO DATE HAS BEEN SET FOR FURTHER FORMAL MEETINGS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VIETNAM. VIETNAM HAS NOT ACCEPTED THUS FAR OUR PROPOSAL FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, ON THE GROUND THAT IT FAILS TO PROVIDE A COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE U.S. RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE, WHICH THEY VIEW AS HAVING BEEN PROMISED BY PAST AGREEMENTS. WE HAVE BEEN AT PAINS IN OUR TALKS IN PARIS, AND IN OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS, TO MAKE CLEAR OUR VIEW THAT THERE IS NO SUCH OBLIGATION, AND THAT U.S. AID TO VIETNAM IS PROHIBITED BY SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF LAW ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS. WE CONTINUE TO HOPE VIETNAM WILL SET ASIDE ITS DEMAND FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE, AND INSTEAD WILL JOIN WITH US IN

LOOKING TOWARD A FUTURE IN WHICH SUCH QUESTIONS CAN BE
DISCUSSED AND RESOLVED UNDER CONDITIONS OF NORMAL
RELATIONS.

LAOS

I WOULD LIKE ALSO TO DISCUSS OUR MISSING IN ACTION
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 176234

EFFORTS IN LAOS. AS MR. WOODCOCK INFORMED YOU, THE
PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION MADE CLEAR TO THE LAO AUTHORITIES
THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO OBTAINING THE FULLEST
POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING FOR OUR PERSONNEL LOST IN THAT
COUNTRY. THE LAO INFORMED THE COMMISSION THAT THEY WOULD
UNDERTAKE RENEWED EFFORTS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE MISSING,
ALTHOUGH THEY CALLED ATTENTION TO THE DIFFICULTY OF THE
SEARCH PROCESS IN VIEW OF THE RUGGED AND UNPOPULATED
TERRITORY OF THEIR COUNTRY. AS IN VIETNAM, LAO
OFFICIALS STATED THAT NO AMERICANS ARE HELD PRISONERS IN
THEIR COUNTRY, AND THAT ALL AMERICANS WHO HAD BEEN
CAPTURED AND WHO HAD SURVIVED HAD BEEN RETURNED.

WE HAVE FOLLOWED UP SINCE THE COMMISSION VISIT BY
PROVIDING THE LAO AUTHORITIES WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
ON OUR MISSING MEN, AND THE LAO HAVE TOLD US THEY ARE
CARRYING OUT SEARCHES FOR INFORMATION AND REMAINS. MY
DEPUTY, ROBERT OAKLEY, PURSUED THIS SUBJECT IN HIS TALKS
IN LAOS IN MAY, AND OUR NEW COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR VIETNAM,
LAOS, AND CAMBODIA, FREDERICK BROWN, IS IN VIENTIANE
THIS WEEK TO FURTHER ADDRESS THIS SUBJECT IN MEETINGS
WITH LAO OFFICIALS. -

IN CONCLUSION LET ME SAY THAT, ALTHOUGH MUCH REMAINS TO
BE DONE, I BELIEVE A START HAS FINALLY BEEN MADE IN
OBTAINING AN ACCOUNTING FOR OUR MEN. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR
TO THE AUTHORITIES OF BOTH VIETNAM AND LAOS THE IMPORTANCE
WE ATTACH TO THEIR CONTINUING EFFORTS IN THIS AREA. WE
ARE CONTINUING OUR TECHNICAL EXCHANGES, AND EXPECT A
RETURN OF REMAINS FROM VIETNAM BEFORE LONG. WHATEVER
THE PROGRESS OF OUR NEGOTIATIONS, I CAN ASSURE THIS
COMMITTEE OF OUR CONTINUED DETERMINATION TO SEEK THE
FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING FOR OUR MEN. IT IS OUR HOPE
UNCLASSIFIED
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 09 STATE 176234

THAT THE RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES IN INDOCHINA UNDERSTAND
THAT THE BEST WAY TO ELIMINATE THIS HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM
AS AN ISSUE OF CONTENTION IS FOR THEM TO PROVIDE THE
FULLEST ACCOUNTING OF WHICH THEY ARE CAPABLE AT THE

EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE.

VANCE

UNCLASSIFIED

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 22-Sep-1999 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, US CONGRESSIONAL DOCUMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 27-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE176234
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EA/VLC:TMCARNEY:JY
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770270-0679
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197707105/baaaetje.tel
Line Count: 330
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 79eff662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1726207
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOLBROOKE JULY 27 TESTIMONY ON MIA
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, US, VM, MIA, (WOLFF, LESTER K)
To: PARIS INFO BANGKOK MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/79eff662-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009